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## FRENCH COLONIZATION IN NORTH AFRICA

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In the contest of the western powers of Europe to colonize the New World, France, owing to a mistaken policy, failed completely and saw her flag and sovereignty practically driven back from this hemisphere. The early attempts of Admiral de Coligny to colonize the Huguenots first in Brazil and then in Florida, were, owing to the indifference and even opposition of the French crown, abortive.<sup>1</sup> And in the later effort of the French crown to colonize in Canada and Louisiana, the attempt to bring over the remains of feudalism as opposed to the strong individualism that characterized the English settlers, reinforced by the Hollanders in New Netherlands, the Swedes and the Germans in Pennsylvania, and the Huguenots in Virginia and the Carolinas, doomed the French settlers, in the valley of the Saint Lawrence and at the mouth of the Mississippi, to defeat in their effort to extend their language and supremacy over the continent of North America.

When the French debarked in July, 1830, in Algeria, they were still dominated by the idea of collective colonization. At that time they had not the slightest notion how to develop a colony. But in time they learnt in the costly school of experience how to colonize, so that today their administration in Algeria and Tunis—owing to such able men as Paul Révoil, ex-governor general of Algeria, Monsieur Jonnart, since May, 1903, governor general of Algeria, and René Millet, ex-resident general of Tunis—is as good as that of the English in India.

<sup>1</sup> Francis Parkman: *Pioneers of France in the New World*. Boston, 1865.

Thomas Balch: *Les Français en Amérique pendant la Guerre de l'Indépendance des États-Unis, 1777-1783*. Paris, 1872, p. 17.

An English translation, *The French in America*, in two volumes, was published at Philadelphia in 1891 and 1895.

Ernest Nys: *Les Origines du Droit International*. Brussels and Paris, 1894, p. 375.

For a generation after the French captured Algiers, they floundered on from one blunder to another, making but little practical use of their opportunity to build up a New France on the southern side of the inland sea. The chance to colonize North Africa that lay open before France, was, however, clearly pointed out in 1868, to her people and rulers by one of the most brilliant of her writers of the last century. Prévost-Paradol, who at the early age of thirty-four was elected in 1865 a member of the French Academy, showed with force and clearness how France was steadily losing ground in Europe from the fact that her people were increasing in numbers less rapidly than the other races; how she should avoid a clash of arms with Prussia and the German states; how the English speaking peoples were extending their influence in many quarters of the earth; how the Slavonic races were beginning to loom up, and finally, he pointed out how France, in order to retain her influence and power in the affairs of the world should use her utmost endeavors to colonize Algeria with French speaking people. "May that day soon come," he wrote, "when our fellow-citizens, crowded in our French Africa, will overflow into Morocco and Tunis, and will establish finally that Mediterranean empire that will be not only a satisfaction for our pride, but will also certainly be in the future development of the world, the last resource of our grandeur."<sup>2</sup>

It was not, however, until after the overthrow of the empire, and the firm establishment of the republic in France, that French colonization in North Africa began to advance with proper strides. Since the later seventies, however, the French policy in Algeria has become more and more liberal both in spirit and fact. And as a result the colony has progressed in all ways. Today there are more than 300,000 French established in Algeria, two-thirds of them colonial born. Foreigners—Spaniards, Italians, Maltese, Germans and others—have come to the colony. And of these many have become naturalized French citizens, thus increasing the total number of French citizens in the colony today to 425,000. To this number must be added the 70,000 Algerian born Jews. These latter, who enjoy the benefits of French citizenship, all speak French more or less. They send their children to the French schools, their young men perform in the French regiment

<sup>2</sup> Prévost-Paradol: *La France Nouvelle*, first published in 1868. Paris: 1884, p 415, *et seq.*

the regulation military service required of able bodied Frenchmen, they are gradually learning to dress year by year more and more like Europeans, and are drawing all the time nearer to a complete assimilation with the French population. With the Jews added to the rest of her citizens, France can count today nearly 500,000 citizens in Algeria. In Tunis, where France extended her sway in 1881 under the leadership of Léon Gambetta and Jules Ferry, she counts 35,000 more of her own people and about 3000 naturalized citizens.<sup>3</sup>

With the knowledge gained with the passing of years the efforts of individual Frenchmen, apart from the government, have helped the growth of French influence in Algeria. The most notable of these efforts was the establishment in 1890 of Le Comité de l'Afrique Française. Of this committee Prince d'Arenberg, the president of the Suez Canal Company, is president, and Prince Roland Bonaparte, M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, and many other notable Frenchmen are members. This committee has published since the beginning of its existence a monthly magazine, *Le Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique Française*.<sup>4</sup>

The European population of Algeria has come mostly from the three Latin countries, France, Italy and Spain.<sup>5</sup> Forming the southern of

<sup>3</sup> Augustin Bernard: Le Recensement de 1906 en Algérie et en Tunisie, *Annales de Géographie*. Paris, 1908, p. 24-33, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> This publication which has a wide circulation in France and her colonies, is a mine filled with facts about Algeria, Tunis and other French African possessions. Another work which contains a wealth of information about Algeria is *Le Peuple Algérien, essais de Démographie Algérienne* par Monsieur Victor Demontès, professor in the Lycée of Algiers (Algiers, 1906). There is a radical difference between these two works. The former is wholly a private undertaking. It is published by an association of private individuals who aim to influence and aid the development of French Africa, and their *Bulletin* is the medium through which they seek to influence both the general French public and the French government, and to its columns Monsieur Demontès is a contributor. The work of Monsieur Demontès, however, was prepared for the colonial exposition at Marseilles in 1906, expressly by direction of the Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie. It is replete with facts that Monsieur Demontès collected for the government with much care and trouble and shows conclusively how a Franco-Algerian race is forming on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The works of M. Leroy-Beaulieu, the noted economist, *L'Algérie et la Tunisie* and *De la colonisation chez les Peuples Modernes*, are also full of valuable information.

<sup>5</sup> Gaston Loth: *Le Peuplement Italien en Tunisie et en Algérie*. Paris: 1905. Victor Demontès: *Le Peuple Algérien*. Alger, 1906.

the four sides that enclose, speaking in general terms, the western half of the Mediterranean Sea, it was natural, owing to proximity and ease of communications, that the greater part of the European immigrants of Algeria should come from those lands, Spain to the west, France to the north and Italy to the east, that formed the other three sides enclosing the western half of that great inland sea. And as a natural result of the geographical position of the three Latin countries as related to Algeria, the Spanish immigrants settled chiefly in the west of Algeria, in the department of Oran, the French in the center, in the department of Alger, and the Italians in the east, in the department of Constantine. But in addition to these three elements there are some 25,000 other foreigners in Algeria. Of these about a half are Maltese who are almost entirely settled in the eastern half of the country. The next most important elements are the Germans and the Swiss. Other nationalities are also represented in small numbers. Of all these strangers, except the Spaniards and the Italians, the French easily absorb the children into their own numbers. For many of the Swiss speak French for their mother tongue and most of those who come from German speaking Switzerland, already know French when they land in Algeria. Consequently the Swiss are easily amalgamated with the French. The Germans are, with few exceptions, Alsacians or Bavarians who have secretly left Germany and taken service in that French military corps known as the French foreign legion. This force, composed of two regiments of 3000 men each, has its headquarters at the city of Sidi-bel-Abbes in the department of Oran in western Algeria. The Alsatian and the other German speaking members of the legion, after serving several years, generally become naturalized French citizens, and marrying French or Spanish girls, bring a Teutonic strain into the otherwise almost entirely Latin blood of the European population of western Algeria. As these soldiers learn French while serving under the French flag, their children, even when the language of the mother is Spanish, learn with the aid of the primary schools, to speak the tongue of the ruling race. The Maltese, who speak a mixture of Arabic and Italian, into which are intermixed English, Spanish, French, Greek and other words of the various languages bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, are so scattered about, that Maltese has never been considered a serious menace to the French language in any part

of Algeria; and especially as the Maltese are not settled in any large and compact communities, their children naturally tend to become more or less French, though less rapidly than those of the Alsacians, the Bavarians and the other Germans, who have seen service in the foreign legion. But the Italians and the Spaniards have settled in Algeria in such numbers, especially the latter, that the French in some localities have had great difficulty in absorbing them. In fact for a time the Spaniards grew so fast in numbers that they threatened French supremacy in parts of the department of Oran.

However, seeing the danger, the French, learning with experience, that sound but expensive teacher, proceeded to legislate with the view of absorbing the children of the Spaniards and the Italians. Until 1889 there was a good deal of difficulty for a foreigner to become a French citizen. But by a naturalization law enacted in that year, the children born in Algeria of the foreign immigrants became French citizens and the young men were required to serve in the French regiments, if upon attaining their majority they did not decline this citizenship. As a result of this naturalization law, beginning with 1889, every year many young men and young women, born in Algeria, but the children of foreign immigrants, mostly Spaniards, Italians and Maltese, have become French citizens; and the men have served for a year with the French regiments in Algeria. In this way the total number of the French citizens in Algeria has grown year by year until now they number some 425,000. But the foreign element, while it has received fresh reinforcements from across the Mediterranean, has each year, by the process of the automatic naturalization of its sons and daughters, suffered such important losses that it has failed to grow in numbers for the last ten years. The foreigners in Algeria who are citizens of another country are all told today about 220,000, or about half as numerous as the French citizens.

This mere change in the legal status of the children of the strangers into citizens of France, would not by itself alone make French men and women of them. But there are many contributory causes that help to make the Algerian born generations of foreigners into French colonists. Born in Algeria, brought up under a republic, accustomed to see the French flag and the French uniforms and to hear the orders of military command given in the French language, the children of the

immigrants do not know the lands of their fathers and mothers. And this is still more true of the second Algerian born generation. To them Algeria is their country. The climate has an influence upon them as upon the French, shaping all the children of the Europeans towards a common North African stock, just as we Americans, descended from ancestors who came from different European lands, have been shaped by the climate of America into a race absolutely unlike in physiognomy those of Europe. Besides, the various races intermarry, thus helping to fuse the different European elements into a new African race that looks to French civilization for its intellectual guidance.

To such haphazard influences of assimilation, however, the French government has not trusted to Gallicize the children of the strangers. It has built and opened schools, where the children of the foreigners from six until thirteen years of age are taught to speak and read and write French. And the doors of the higher schools and institutions of learning are open to the few who wish to avail themselves of them. Of course by these means French is not entirely substituted for the various foreign tongues. Yet, inasmuch as practically all of the Spaniards and the Italians are poor and uneducated when they come to Algeria, two-thirds of them neither know how to write nor read, the contact with the French, the ruling race, injects some few French words and idioms into their speech. The necessity of all foreigners learning a few words of French at least is not due solely to the fact that French is the tongue of government, the intellectual classes, and commerce, and a convenient common medium of exchange of thought between foreigners of different nationalities; but also in addition because with rare exceptions, the Italians, far from speaking the speech of Dante, and the Spaniards, the tongue of Cervantes, use various provincial patois. The confusion caused by the mixture of the local dialects of the same national language aids the acquirement by the foreigners of some French, owing to the necessity of every individual in every community knowing a few common every day words at least that may be understood by every one, from whatever land they may happen to come.

This mingling of French with the local foreign idioms is increased among the children who go to school. And in those localities, where the French are much more numerous than the strangers, the latter

not only learn the language of the ruling race quickly, but are apt to use it as their common every day speech. This is notably the case in the city of Algiers. In that town, the chief port of the colony and its commercial center, the French are much more numerous than the strangers. The foreign colony of Algiers is also more diversified than elsewhere; there its makeup is divided in substantial proportions between the Spaniards, the Italians, and a few thousand Maltese and representatives of various other nationalities. In the city of Constantine also, the French part of the population is so much superior in numbers to the Italians and the Maltese who are among its inhabitants, that there also French is practically the every day speech of all foreigners. But in the western part of the colony, the Spaniards, and along the Algerian coast towards the east, the Italians are so numerous that their respective languages do not give way so easily before French as is the case in the districts round the cities of Algiers and Constantine. However, even in those quarters where the foreign element is most numerous, thanks to the French schools, the French language holds its own and even makes some gains.

The French have come to realize so well how important it is for their future domination to teach French to the rising generations, that the French policy in Algeria is well summed up in the words of Victor Demontès: "*La politique française en Algérie est de plus en plus de nos jours une politique scolaire.*"

As an aid to education, as a means of absorbing the children of the foreigners and also to open new regions to European civilization, the French government has prepared year by year sites for villages to which French colonists were especially attracted. To these villages the names of notable Frenchmen were generally given. Thus for example were created and settled with French farmers, the villages of Lamoricière, Canrobert, Coligny, Voltaire, Rochambeau, Prévost-Paradol and Fromentin.

Another influence that helps the absorbing of the children of the strangers is that many of the Mohammedan inhabitants, both Arabs and Kabyles, learn to speak a little French and to use French money; and they often enlist in the native regiments commanded by French officers. There are also some individual Arabs and Kabyles who, seeking of their own volition the advantages of education offered by



the French in the higher educational institutions, learn to speak and write French as well as the average educated Frenchman. Some of this elite, like Ismaël Hamet, become officers in the French army<sup>6</sup>; others enter other branches of the French service. Some have read law and become members of the bar. Others have studied medicine to become physicians. And a very few have entered the field of commerce. One, a M. Rahhal, a native of Nedroma in northwestern Algeria close to the Moroccan frontier, has won for himself a recognized place among Frenchmen of letters. With the passing of years the French have learnt not only how to get along better and better with their Mohammedan fellow subjects, but the futility of trying to make in a few years Frenchmen of the great mass of their Islamic subjects. Instead, the French government is trying to lead both the Arabs and the Kabyles so as to advance by evolution their own Arab or Kabyle civilization, and in that way promote and develop the *modus vivendi* actually existing between the populations of European and African descent. But in this process of evolution a little of the civilization of the French slowly infiltrates into that of the Mohammedans.

To rule this land of mixed races, the French, learning by experience, have gradually changed their system of colonial government so as to meet better than formerly the needs of the situation. Owing to the variety of nationalities in the makeup of the European element, and the mutual jealousies and antipathies of the Christians and the native Jews for one another, and the hate of the Mohammedans for both, the French authorities found great difficulty to maintain peace and order between the various elements.

Beginning about 1900, the powers of the governor general of Algeria, who up to that time was merely an ornamental figure head like the French president, were gradually increased and added to, until he became a strong executive officer, appointed by the French premier, the real executive head of republican France.<sup>7</sup> Thus the prefects of the three Algerian departments of Oran, Alger, and Constantine, all the customs officials, the foresters, the rural police officers, the policemen of the cities, and numerous other members of the civil service of Algeria

<sup>6</sup> Ismaël Hamet: *Les Musulmans français du Nord de l'Afrique*. Paris, 1906.

<sup>7</sup> Waldeck-Rousseau: "L'Algérie," speech of the premier in the chamber of deputies, June 14, 1901, printed in *Politique, Française et Étrangère*. Paris: 1903. p. 375.

were made appointees, directly or indirectly through subordinates, of the governor general. As a consequent result of this growth in the power of the governor general of Algeria, making him actually the greatest power in the colony, the present incumbent of the office, Monsieur Jonnart, and his immediate predecessor, Paul Révoil, have maintained peace and quiet in the colony in a manner that their predecessor could not.

In Tunis, where France extended her sway in 1881, the efforts of France to colonize in the land where Carthage once held supreme rule have been in many ways successful.<sup>8</sup> Today France counts 35,000 of her own people and about 3000 naturalized citizens, almost all Italians. In addition, living in the Regency of Tunis with the million and a half Mohammedans, there are about 80,000 Italians of whom more than half come from the neighboring island of Sicily. The Maltese in Tunis number about 10,000 and other European races, Spaniards, Greeks, English, etc., amount to 3000 or 4000 more. The Tunisian Jews are about 60,000 in numbers. As in Algeria, so in Tunis, France has done much to advance the country in the line of economic and commercial progress. She has sought also to develop, and with much success, social institutions looking to the eventual fusing in the distant future of all the elements of the population into a people imbued in large measure with her own civilization. And towards this end she has built not only harbors, railroads, fine roads, telegraphs, telephones and other accessories of modern commercial development and intercourse, but also France has built schools for her own boys and girls and the children of the foreigners, the Jews and the Mohammedans. As a result of her efforts to open primary education to the various races, about a third of the foreigners in Tunis now speak French more or less, a large part of the Jews know the language, and many Mohammedans also have learnt it. And every year a greater percentage of the children of the foreigners and the Tunisian Jews attend the French schools, and the number of the Mohammedan boys who go to these schools also grows, for as yet the Mohammedans rarely send their girls to the French schools.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Henri Pensa: *L'Avenir de la Tunisie: Protectorat-Colonisation*. Paris, 1903.

<sup>9</sup> *La Tunisie: Publié par la Revue Générale des Sciences*. Paris, 1896, pp. 1177-1182.

Wisely adopting the lessons learnt by their successes and failures in governing Algeria, the French have incorporated into their government of Tunis everything that had proved a success in Algeria. And notably having found that it would have been a great aid to them in Algeria to have continued the office of Dey of Algiers with merely nominal powers, the French retained the office of the Bey of Tunis. It is in the latter's name that the French resident general of Tunis issues decrees, and using the Bey as a mask, actually governs without too openly appearing to rule.

There is now beginning to form in Tunis, a Franco-Tunisian population, as there has already grown up a Franco-Algerian population of more than 300,000 in the larger of the two French North African colonies.

It is on this Franco-Algerian population, reinforced by a continual inflow from the other European races, that France must count to colonize Morocco in the years to come. With the more rapid increase in the population of other European states, France has gradually fallen from the prepondering place she held 200 years ago at the European council board.<sup>10</sup> And in recent years this loss in France's power and prestige has gone on with great rapidity. The birth rate has steadily fallen in France for a hundred years to such an extent that in the year 1907 there were in France almost 20,000 less births than deaths.<sup>11</sup> That is a fact that, so far as her own population is concerned, speaks defeat for France in the coming struggle with Spain, and perhaps other powers, for the colonial mastery of Morocco. But Spain is still dormant, and each year the French are teaching more and more children of Spanish and Italian parents settled in Algeria to speak French, and loyalty to the French flag. In Algeria, too, France has for the future colonial struggle in Morocco a precious advantage over Spain, in that among the Franco-Algerians, there are some twelve to fifteen thousand Protestants; and in Tunis there are a thousand or two more. And our history shows that the qualities of individualism engendered by Protestantism make for successful colonists.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Nys: *La Notion et le Rôle de L'Europe en Droit International*. Brussels, 1903, p. 62 (40).

*Almanach de Gotha*, 1908. Gotha, Justus Perthes.

<sup>11</sup> *Science*, December 18, 1908, p. 877, article entitled French Vital Statistics.

<sup>12</sup> Emile de Laveleye: *Le Protestantisme et le Catholicisme, dans leurs rapports avec la liberté et la prospérité des peuples*. *Revue de Belgique*, Bruxelles, 15 Janvier,

The importance and value of Morocco is due to her geographical position.<sup>13</sup> Astride of the Mediterranean Sea and of the Atlantic Ocean, the power established in Morocco will control one side of the western entrance of the Mediterranean,<sup>14</sup> which since the cutting of the Suez Canal, has again become a highway of commerce between the Occident and the Orient. In addition, owing to the Atlas Mountains, some of whose tops are as high as the Alps, and on some of whose peaks the snow rests almost all the year, Morocco is supplied with that all important element in the laws of natural economy, *water*. The moisture borne on the breezes that sweep across the Atlantic are precipitated on the high peaks of the Atlas, and poured into the rivers that give life to the lowlands that lie between the mountains and the ocean and the inland sea.

The future status of Morocco has become most uncertain.<sup>15</sup> Owing to geographical propinquity, France and Spain have strong claims for obtaining the control and possession of the land of the Setting Sun. Spain is giving the first glimmers of an awakening from the long sleep in which the narrow and ignorant policy of her medieval kings wrapped her. The most encouraging sign of this rebirth of Spain is the attempt to readjust her currency with the view of securing to her people the blessings brought by an honest and stable measures of values. Religious toleration is also beginning to gain ground. Doubtless five, perhaps ten years, will pass before she will be ready seriously to attempt to share in the colonization of Morocco. And during these years France will increase her power in Algeria and Tunis, especially in the

1875; republished in *Essais et Études, Première Serie*, 1861–1875. Ghent and Paris, 1894.

Montesquieu: *Esprit des Lois*. Paris, 1867, p. 372.

James S. de Benneville; *More Japonico: A Critique of the Effect of an Idea—Communityism—on the Life and History of a People*. Printed at the Japan Gazette Press, Yokohama, Japan, 1908, p. 311. Mr. de Benneville is now residing in Japan where he has lived a number of years.

<sup>13</sup> Victor Bérard: *L’Affaire Marocaine*. Paris, 1906, p. 1, *et seq.*

<sup>14</sup> R. de Flotte de Roquevaire: *Carte du Maroc, à l’Echelle du, 1,000,000<sup>e</sup>*. Paris. 1904, Maison Andriveau-Goujon, Henry Barrere, Editeur *Geographe*.

Andrees: *Allgemeiner Handatlas*. Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1906; map entitled Sudeuropa and Mittelmeer, Verkehrskarte, p. 112–113.

<sup>15</sup> René Millet: *Notre politique extérieure de 1898 à 1905*. Paris, 1905. Ernest Nys: *Le Droit International: Les principes, les théories, les faits*. Paris, 1905, vol. ii. pp. 101–102.

department of Oran, in western Algeria, by teaching French to the children of the Spaniards and other European foreigners as well as to those of the native Jews and to a few thousand of her Mohammedan subjects. For upon her own European population France cannot count for any considerable influx of reinforcements to settle and develop the northwestern African *bled*. The population of Spain, however, is increasing by the steady excess of births over deaths and ready to send a constant and substantial overflow into other lands. Let this current once turn under the lead of liberal and tolerant statesmanship towards Morocco, and it seems reasonable to suppose that Spain will secure for her language and sovereignty, a substantial part of that still almost unknown land, and divide its future occupancy with France.

Of course the Mohammedan population, that is variously estimated by travelers from 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 to 12,000,000 and even up to 15,000,000 in numbers, will play an important part in the future destinies of the country. The French found it no easy task to conquer Algeria, and whether one or two or more powers seek to subdue Morocco, the task, owing to the nature of the country and the hardy independence of the mountaineers of the Atlas and other mountains, will be even a more difficult undertaking than the subjugation of Algeria.

Knowing of the absolute failure of France in her attempts to colonize during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the two Americas, the world at large, and even the mass of the French people, are only now just beginning to realize that France not only has succeeded in her colonization of Algeria much better than in any previous attempt to extend the French race, and language and institutions beyond the seas, but also that France has learnt so much in the expensive but thorough school of experience that today in her North African colonial policy she is abreast of the best English colonial régime in India or elsewhere. But owing to the failure of the French race to increase by a reasonable excess of births over deaths, France's chance to develop her influence in Algeria and Tunis and even extend it westward into Morocco depends upon her ability and capacity to absorb, primarily through education, into the mass of her own Franco-Algerian citizens, the children and grandchildren of the European immigrants who are

crossing in a constant stream the Mediterranean Sea to build up new homes in that part of the North African *bled* at present controlled by France.

In this land of ours, we of English speech have in the past successfully absorbed, in Pennsylvania first the Swedes and second in great measure the Germans known as Pennsylvania Dutch; in New York the Hollanders; and in the Carolinas the Huguenots. And today we are absorbing other races who speak yet other languages.<sup>16</sup> In other words, France is confronted on a small scale in North Africa with much the same problem that we have solved and are still solving, of absorbing and conforming to one national speech the influx of strangers from other European lands. It is impossible to read the future with certainty. As Byron, however, says: "The best prophet of the future is the past." And all the contemporary signs judging by the past point to France's ability to absorb in her North American possessions the inflowing current of strangers from across the inland sea, by teaching the children and grandchildren of these foreigners to speak French, and thus to gain for her the necessary population with which to colonize eventually a part of the undeveloped and ill governed so-called *Empire* of Morocco. But "*qui vivra, vera.*"

<sup>16</sup> William Z. Ripley: Races in the United States, the *Atlantic Monthly*. December, 1908.